

Faith-Based Immigration Talking Points for House of Representatives

Path to Citizenship

- People of faith strongly support a pathway to full citizenship for our undocumented community members. Such a pathway should be clear, timely, direct, and accessible.
- Proposals that would create a pathway to legal status but stop short of citizenship are not consistent with who we strive to be as a nation, nor with how people of faith live out the scriptural commandment 'to welcome the stranger'.
- Communities of faith witness daily the pride that citizenship classes and naturalization ceremonies bring to our immigrant brothers and sisters. Second-class status would mean that instead of helping our community members foster patriotism by studying U.S. history and civics for the citizenship exam, we would have to tell them "you'll never really be an American." That is contrary to the core principles of liberty and equality on which this country was founded, and to our national identity as a "land of opportunity."
- More than 7 in 10 Americans support a path to citizenship (Gallup News Service, 2/5/13)

Family Unity

- Families are the fabric of strong communities and economies. Immigration reform must facilitate family reunification. Family unity spurs integration, as families provide strong foundations for learning English, purchasing a home, pursuing employment, starting a business, preparing children for school, and contributing to communities.
- We are not opposed to increases in employment-based visas, but they should not come at the expense of family visas - it's not a zero-sum game. People want to join their families through legal channels, but with wait times as long as 24 years, have no real options to do so. To fix the immigration system, we need to recognize the God-given desire to be with one's family.
- We are opposed to proposals that would eliminate the ability of U.S. citizens to sponsor their siblings, found both in the Senate bill and in the SKILLS Act as it passed the House Judiciary Committee. Brothers and sisters should be able to be together. Our sacred texts show the significance of a unified family. Mary & Martha and disciples Simon Peter & Andrew, as well as James & John are examples of siblings remaining close as adults.

Align the enforcement of immigration laws with humanitarian values

- While all laws need to be enforced to be effective, the way that we enforce our laws must have integrity and reflect the best of American values. We can implement common-sense and humane guidelines; end unsafe deportations in the middle of the night and substandard detention conditions, and establish alternatives to detention and access to due process for those trying to navigate our complex immigration system.
- Programs that burden local law officials with enforcing federal immigration laws, such as those called for in the SAFE Act, erode trust between officers and the communities they serve. When police are seen as immigration enforcement agents, communities are less safe because many community members stop reporting crime out of fear that they, their family members or their neighbors might be arrested because of their immigration status.

· The U.S. has dramatically increased deportations, fences, border patrol officers, and immigration detention, spending over \$18 billion of taxpayers' money last year alone. It is now time to truly fix the broken immigration system by improving the efficiency of ports of entry, expanding visa availability, and eliminating application backlogs. Rather than spending additional funds on costly border security measures, we should address the root causes of migration, including economic disparity. The reality is that the factors that fuel migration will not be quelled by increased border security measures. Multi-faceted reforms are necessary.

More information by state: www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/economics-immigration-resource-page